

POLAND CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Adult males and teenagers usually greet each other with a handshake. Close friends greet by kissing the right, left, and then right cheeks. At social and business gatherings, Poles greet each guest personally, women first. A man might kiss the hand of an older or younger woman, but not the hand of a woman near his age.

When introducing a man, one uses *Pan* (Mr.) before the last name; for a woman, the term is *Pani* (Mrs.). Between adults, first names are used only by mutual consent. Friends greet each other with *Cześć*, a way of saying “Hi.” Common Polish greetings include *Dzień dobry* (Good day), *Dobry wieczór* (Good evening), and *Do widzenia* (Good-bye). *Dziękuję* (Thank you) often precedes an answer about how one is doing.

Gestures:

Poles frequently gesticulate while conversing, whether to emphasize a point or to express emotion.

Pointing is not impolite. Poles hold both thumbs in closed fists to wish others good luck. Blinking both eyes can signify romantic interest. Winking one eye indicates that the words just spoken are not quite true or may be a joke.

Personal space tends to be closer in Poland than in North America. Young females who are close friends often hold hands while walking. Discourteous people are called *prymatywny* (primitive).

Holidays:

Official holidays include New Year's Day, Easter (two days), Labor Day (1 May), Constitution Day (3 May), Corpus Christi (in May or June), All Saints' Day (1 Nov.), Independence Day (11 Nov.), and Christmas.

Christmas is the most important holiday in Poland. On 6 December, children receive small gifts from St. Nicholas. Then on Christmas Eve, when the first star is sighted, the family gathers for a 12-course, meatless meal that usually includes fresh fish, dishes featuring poppy seeds or mushrooms, a special dessert of fruit cooked in syrup, and other traditional foods. On 26 December, Poles visit friends and relax.

For Easter Saturday, people take a basket of specific foods (ham, eggs, sausages, pieces of bread, etc.) to church to be blessed; then they eat the food on Sunday after mass. Easter Monday is known as “Wet Monday,” a day for young people to squirt or dump water on each other. Children celebrate the first spring day or “truant day” outside, wearing funny or odd clothing.